

Approved For Release 2005/04/11 : CIA-RDP88-01314R000100140007-3

Washington Bureau

One of a series
By Luther A. Huston

THE BALTIMORE SUNPAPERS

The nestor of Washington news bureaus is the *Baltimore Sunpapers*. The Sun has had a Washington bureau for 135 years and, as far as available records reveal, no other newspaper has had its own correspondent or bureau in the national capital that long.

James Lawrenson became the Sun's first "chief of Bureau" in May 1837. Lawrenson was a clerk in the Post Office Department who contributed letters to the newspaper. He sent his first "dispatch" on June 13. *The Sunpapers of Baltimore*, a book published in 1937, refers to it as follows:

"This first Washington dispatch still has a professional interest for newspaper men, because it happens to be at once extremely old-fashioned and extremely modern. It begins, 'Without intending to violate the Sabbath'—it is dated on Sunday—'I avail myself of this moment to drop you a line by a friend, who leaves here early in the morning for Baltimore. Then follows an account of the principal news event of the preceding day—the proceedings in court against Amos Kendall, Postmaster-General, to compel him to accept banknotes, instead of specie, at the postoffices—written in clear, succinct, adequate English, covering the somewhat complicated legal jockeying in three hundred words. The dispatch ends with this paragraph:

"The new furniture of the Palace is now going in. It is very splendid, and I am happy to say it is of American manufacture. You will recollect that the late Mr. Monroe raised a breeze by importing his chairs from England. The President is well, and for aught that I know, is happy.

Yours truly."

The book continues: "It is a long time since the White House was the Palace and a Washington correspondent was Yours Truly, but even in that faraway time, Sun men had begun to get the idea that their readers were little interested in argument and ornamentation, and were eager for essential facts. The thing that built The Sun was news, accurate, early and comprehensive, without the burden of useless verbiage."

Now a staff of 14

Lawrenson continued to send his letters or dispatches until 1866. His successors, many of them noted American journalists, adhered, and still do, to his journalistic precepts, although their stories often run more than 300 words.

Peter Kumpa, the present bureau chief, heads a flexible staff of 14. The flexibility arises from the fact that members of the staff, all of whom absorbed Sun journalistic gospel in the Baltimore office before being assigned to Washington, are qualified to take over any field of news—whether it is politics, diplomacy or the national economy.

International as a domestic bureau because most of its members have headed foreign bureaus or covered foreign assignments.

Kumpa, Bruce Winters, Dean Mills, Adam Clymer, and Ernest B. Furguson have all headed the Sun's Moscow Bureau. Kumpa has also been chief of bureau in Tokyo and Hong Kong. Paul Ward, the bureau manager, has covered assignments in most parts of the globe.

Phillip Potter, bureau chief before Kumpa, has officially retired but is soon to go to London from where he will write special articles for the Sun. If there is any world capital from which Potter has not filed dispatches, or any major story from India to Israel, that Potter has not covered, the record books do not disclose it.

The present assignments of the Washington staff are: John S. Carroll, general; James Keat, diplomat and White House; Winters, Congress; Mills, Supreme Court; Art Pine, Economics; Clymer White House and Political; Walter Gordon, courts and investigative reporting; Gilbert Lewthwaite, general; Charles Corddry, Pentagon; Albert Schlstedt Jr., Congress; and Frederick B. Hill, Maryland affairs.

Furguson writes a column and Muriel Dobbin writes about people and sociological studies.

Unlike many independent Washington bureaus, the Sun's does not stress coverage of strictly Maryland news. Because of Baltimore's proximity to Washington, reporters can always be sent from the home office if a story of purely regional interest requires staff coverage.

Notables of the past

Many journalists of national and worldwide repute have served the Washington bureau, either as chiefs or staff men. Among them was Frank R. Kent, who headed the bureau in 1910, and earned a national reputation as a political writer; J. Fred Essary, who became bureau chief in 1912 and until his death was one of the best known members of the Washington press corps, and Drew Pearson, who once covered the State Department but became a widely syndicated and often controversial columnist.

Gerald Griffin went from chief of the Washington bureau to the editorship of the *Evening Sun*, a position he now holds, and John W. Owens, after heading the Washington Bureau, became editor of the Sun.

Three newsmen who served in the Washington and other bureaus of the Sun who won Pulitzer Prizes were the late Dewey Fleming, who covered the Senate and became bureau chief; the late Mark Watson, military correspondent; and Paul Ward.

At one time the Sun had bureaus in Chicago and New York but discontinued



PETER KUMPA, Baltimore Sun Washington Bureau chief, holds picture of James Lawrenson, the Sun's first bureau chief 135 years ago.

them and Washington is now its only domestic bureau. Bureaus are maintained in London, Paris, Tokyo, Moscow and other capitals and it would surprise no one if some day soon there would be a Sun bureau in Peking.

Not only was the Sun the first newspaper to have a Washington bureau but it is the only one that ever erected and occupied its own building in the national capital. The building at 1314 F Street N.W. still stands. It was opened in 1876 when Francis A. Richardson was head of the bureau, and housed not only the news staff but "a counting room which booked subscriptions and advertisements." The building was sold in 1907 and the Sun's Washington Bureau "began a series of migrations" which ended on September 1, 1927 when it moved into a suite of offices in the National Press Building.

Approved For Release 2005/04/11 : CIA-RDP88-01314R000100140007-3